

THE
SINFULNESS OF WITHHOLDING CORN.

695. b. 6.
6
SERMON.

PREACHED AT
GREAT OUSEBORNE,
ON SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1800.

*Defend the poor and fatherless: see that such as are in need
and necessity have right.* PSALMIST.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL CLAPHAM, M. A.
VICAR OF GREAT OUSEBORNE, NEAR KNARESBRO'.

*Humbly recommended to the Nobility and Gentry to distribute
among their Tenants.*

Price Threepence—or Twelve for Half-a-Crown.

Printed by W. GLENDINNING, No. 25, Hatton Garden.

And Sold by Messrs. RIVINGTONS, St. Paul's Church-
Yard; VERNOR and HOOD, Poultry; WEST and
HUGHES, Paternoster-Row; ROBSON, Bond-Street;
BINNS, Leeds; TODD and TESSEYMAN, York;
HARGROVE, Wakefield.

Micrograph showing the surface of a specimen after 10 minutes of etching. The surface appears relatively smooth with some minor texture. A scale bar indicates 10 micrometers.

GREYAT OUSEBORG W.

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 1894

and necessary four right. I found the four and thirteen: see that what is not in need.



Price Theobaldus—on Peter for Hall-a-Crown.

Printed by W. G. Sanderson, No. 25, Hanson Street.
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Street.

To the Right Reverend Father in God,
WILLIAM CLEAVER, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.

MY LORD,

IN writing the following discourse, which your Lordship, with your wonted goodness and condescension, has been pleased to permit me to address to you, I was actuated by a sense of duty; in presenting it to the world, I was encouraged by many well-disposed hearers to hope that it would not be altogether inefficacious. Moved with compassion for the miserable situation of the Poor—whether the present scarcity, which, it is probable, is different in different counties, is real or artificial—should the preaching or the publishing of this undornamented exhortation be the means of prevailing with but one single dealer in corn, to gladden the hearts of his needy and distressed neighbours, by supplying them with grain at a moderate and reasonable rate, I shall not regret that I obeyed the impulse of feeling in writing it, nor that I yielded to the solicitations of an affectionate auditory in publishing it.

I am, my Lord,

With the truest respect,

Your Lordship's

Most dutiful and obliged Servant,

SAMUEL CLAPHAM.

Knaresbro', March 25, 1800.

Lately published by the same Author,

A SERMON, preached at the Visitation of the Lord Bishop of Chester, holden at Boroughbridge, September 2d, 1794, in which is impartially considered, how far **METHODISM** conduces to the Interests of Christianity, and the Welfare of Society. Published by **HIS LORDSHIP'S COMMAND**.

A SERMON, preached at Knaresbro', October 12th, 1794, before the Royal Knaresbro' Volunteer Foresters. Dedicated, by permission, to the **RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD LOUGHBOROUGH, LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF GREAT BRITAIN**.

A SERMON, preached at Stockton-upon-Tees, on the Fast Day, March 25, 1795. Dedicated, by permission, to the **HONOURABLE and RIGHT REVEREND the LORD BISHOP of DURHAM**.

A SERMON, preached at Knaresbro', October 23d, 1796, on occasion of a Form of Thanksgiving being read for the late abundant Harvest.

A SERMON, preached at Great Ouseborne, December 19th, 1797, the Day appointed for a General Thanksgiving. Dedicated, by permission, to the **LORD BISHOP of CHESTER**. Humbly recommended to the Nobility, Gentry, &c. to distribute among their Tenants. Price Threepence, or Twelve for Half-a-Crown.

A SERMON, preached at St. John's, Wakefield, for the Benefit of the Choir, December 16th, 1798. Dedicated, by permission, to the **LORD BISHOP of CHESTER**.

A SERMON.

PROVERBS xi. 29.

He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessings shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

THE lower ranks of mankind, constituting the largest and most useful part of the community, they who derive advantage from their labours, and convenience from their services, instinctively feel, and unequivocally acknowledge it to be their indispensable duty, to supply them, as far as their circumstances will admit, or their influence may extend, not merely with the means of subsistence, but with whatever will alleviate the sufferings, and lessen the cares of life. Melancholy, indeed, is the reflection, that, whilst some are possessed of all the elegances their rank may demand, and others of all the comforts an inferior station may, without presumption, expect, they, without whose unremitted toil such elegances and comforts cannot be obtained, should be reduced to pinching want, and extreme distress. Yet without a difference of condition society could not subsist; and without a difference of condition the superior ranks

would want the opportunity of those benevolent affections, implanted by nature, refined by education, and awakened by sensibility, the exercise of which constitutes always their chief happiness, and generally their highest merit. It is, notwithstanding, but too obvious, that whatever humanity may devise, and liberality effect, all is, in the present state of things, insufficient for the support of those who, adding thereto the produce of their own labour, together with rigid œconomy, are unable to maintain their families, and have no other prospect before them than penury and wretchedness.

That discourses addressed from the pulpit to an assembly of Christians, should either illustrate some interesting doctrine, or enforce some essential precept of the Gospel, is gladly admitted, and religiously observed, by every preacher whose mind is impressed with a sense of the value of salvation : still it must be allowed, that circumstances may sometimes occur, which justify a deviation from this useful practice ; and such, I presume, will the subject be considered on which I this day propose to expatiate ; a subject which occasions very general conversation, because it involves a very general interest ; I shall easily be understood to mean the present high price, and extreme scarcity of corn,

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one of the chief ingredients of human subsistence.

The Apostle wisely enjoins the ministers of the Gospel to "be careful to give no offence in "any thing, that the ministry be not blamed"—that their hearers may have no pretence either to despise their exhortations, or reject their admonitions. Should I, in the prosecution of this discourse, excite in the breast of any one of you, the slightest emotion of displeasure, "forgive me," I beseech you, "this wrong." You will all, I am sure, do me the justice to believe, that I would not intentionally give to the meanest person, either in the discharge of my professional duty, or in the common concerns of life, any the remotest cause of offence. I now stand before you the advocate of the poor; I undertake the office of pleading the cause of the needy, of those who cannot plead their own.

You may perhaps be disposed prematurely to conclude, that I am attempting to persuade you to renounce your interests: I am, on the contrary, on this, as on every other occasion, solicitous to promote your most substantial interests. Let me then engage your candid attention; and should your understanding be convinced, I pray God your heart may be so much affected, as to
confirm

confirm the justness of the wise man's observation, " a word spoken in due season, how good is it ! "

The inconvenience and distress brought on the middle, and the lower classes of society, by the very exorbitant price of all sorts of grain, naturally lead us to enquire, whether there be an actual scarcity or not ? The present appearance, at least in this neighbourhood, is such as by no means to justify the alarming apprehensions, that a scarcity does exist. On the contrary, it is acknowledged by many, the accuracy of whose information we cannot dispute, and the rectitude of whose minds we dare not arraign, that with a sparing and judicious use of it, there will be a sufficiency until the next harvest. The deficiency in the quantity of all sorts of grain is believed to be one third less than the common produce : it is reasonable, therefore, in order to support and indemnify the farmer, that the price should be high in proportion to the deficiency ; but the country would, without a murmur, be willing to purchase it, although, instead of being a third,* it had been one half short of the average

* I suppose the average price of wheat to be nearly 6s. 6d. per bushel : had it then been sold at 9s. 6d. the farmer would have received an equivalent in price for the deficiency of his

age quantity. This, then, being the case, no very satisfactory reason can be assigned why the price of it should be so immoderately high, and the difficulty of obtaining it so extremely great.

Now, by withholding corn, by supplying the market so sparingly, that there is not sufficient for general consumption; the price, as every one must have a little, is unavoidably advanced, and that in proportion to the smallness of the quantity exposed to sale.

The state of the market is known; you perceive that the supply is inadequate to the demand. Corn, notwithstanding, continues to be withheld. Is it from the apprehension, that if a sufficient quantity were produced, the stores would soon fail, and that, before the time of harvest, there would be an universal scarcity? Such precaution would be entitled to the warmest approbation. It would be demonstrating a very provident care for the community. Whether this be the principle by which the dealers in corn are actuated, I take not upon me to say. But had it been sold at 12s. the bushel, he would have been, indeed, a considerable gainer, and no dissatisfaction would, I believe, have been expressed; instead of which it has sold, and is now selling, from 14s. to 17s. the bushel !!!

to determine; But the generally received opinion is, that the greater the quantity offered for sale, the more rapidly will the price fall; and that personal interest, therefore, dictates the pernicious measure.

It will probably be said, that were an abundance of corn carried to market, the stock would be very soon exhausted.* But this reasoning supposes that every one who has grain to dispose of should regularly send the same quantity, as he would have done in the most plentiful season. Whereas, would a few respectable men honestly determine, and liberally engage themselves not to withhold their corn, but to offer to sale as much as their stores warrant, and expedience demands, the same principle would soon pervade the whole neighbourhood; and every considerate and upright man being actuated by the same laudable motive, the present high price would immediately abate.

* The harvests previous to the last were, it is very well, and very generally known, so abundant as to leave a stock in the hands of the farmers sufficient to make up for the deficiency of the last harvest. To which we may add the very large and continued importations which Government, in its consummate wisdom, and unceasing solicitude for the welfare of the country, hath obtained from foreign nations.

But

But to this mode of proceeding, just in itself, and happy in its effects, a very powerful reason, because a very profitable expedient, is too frequently opposed; that grain of every sort can be sold at home to "men of like occupation" with yourselves, not only without trouble and expence, but at an higher price. Permit me now to ask—by what motives are the buyers influenced? To accommodate the public? To supply the poor with it upon lower terms than those on which they would otherwise be under the necessity of purchasing it? The very contrary! To keep it out of their reach; "to grind," as Solomon strongly expresses it, "their very faces;" and to dispense it in such a measure, as their avarice shall first dictate, and their liberality will afterwards accept. What? By disposing of grain to men of this detestable character, do not you conspire with them, and are not you, in their hands, the instruments of enhancing its excessive value, and supporting its present extravagant price? Are not the calamities which the poor endure to be attributed to those men who, having grain, refuse to sell it, or who sell it only to those who dispose of it at an advanced profit? "O my soul, come not thou into their secrets; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!"

A degree

A degree of merit is claimed, and no one will withhold it from them to whom it is due; which is, that the farmer supplies the labourers he employs, with corn at nearly the same rate it is sold at in the most abundant seasons. I would have passed over this circumstance in silence, had not some men arrogated to themselves more merit than may appear, when the subject is fairly investigated, to be their due. For, though you may afford bread to the labourer and his little family, let it be considered that your refusal must be not only accompanied with a very considerable advance of wages, but also with the displeasing apprehension, that he would be ready, upon every occasion, to enter into the service of another master; finding your attachment to him so small, and that in a time when he most needed it, the interest he took in your welfare would, it might be expected, abate in the same proportion. To his fidelity you must necessarily commit the management of a part of your property; so that a motive of interest, as well as a sense of duty, enforces the propriety of attaching him to you, by every tie which policy can dictate, and power supply.

The condition of these labourers we must esteem fortunate; but wretched beyond description must be the situation of the artisan and mechanic,

mechanic, who have no such resources. What heart can be so insensible as to contemplate with indifference the affecting scene of a father who, returning hungry and faint "from his work and "his labour in the evening," has his ears pierced with the cries of his children for a sufficiency of that bread which he is unable to procure? Instead of finding in his home the chief comfort of his life—instead of being entertained by his wife and children, the dearest objects of his affections, with the relation of domestic circumstances, which have occurred during his absence in the day, interesting to his feelings, and soothing to his mind, he is assailed with the calamitous detail of their sufferings, all originating in unsatisfied hunger, and rendered more exquisitely painful by the anticipation of the continuance of the calamity. His time, though employed in incessant labour; his wages, however they may be advanced, and however faithfully applied to the support of his family, are insufficient for their maintenance. Deprived as they are of bread—food to which they have been the most accustomed—the most congenial to their nature, and which is, of all others, the most satisfying and nutritious, he cannot, notwithstanding, purchase any wholesome substitute; every article of subsistence being high in the same proportion. For corn is, as it were, the

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standard

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standard by which the price of provisions, of every other sort, is regulated.

Now what is the cause of this general calamity? To what are we to attribute the misery and wretchedness, which, in consequence of it, pervade the lower classes of society? If actual scarcity be the cause, it is the visitation of an all-wise and righteous Providence; and however we may suffer from it, let us all devoutly say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!" But if, as is the prevailing idea, two causes combine—a partial scarcity, and a general disposition to withhold from the market, the quantity necessary for a limited consumption—let all those men who designedly withhold their corn consider, whether, if any goods indispensable to *their* subsistence were, through a spirit of monopoly, or of speculation, for a considerable time withheld from sale, or sold in such small proportions, and at such an extravagant rate, that they were unable to purchase more than a third or a fourth part of what they generally consumed—let them consider, I say, whether they would not express the highest dissatisfaction, and excite the loudest clamours? Whether they would not most piteously lament the indisposition of the Legislature to redress the grievance, and alleviate the calamity? And yet there is nothing
invented

invented by the ingenuity, and prepared by the hand of man, which can be considered as a *necessary* of life, compared with bread, the chief support of the inhabitants of this country. It might therefore be supposed, that no description of men would, for the sake of obtaining a temporary advantage, condemn more than one half of the kingdom to not only all the mortification of self-denial, but all the hardships of rigorous poverty. Such men, it is true, can be compelled by no existing law to supply the poor with bread. But if we are commanded by Almighty God to GIVE to the needy, according as our circumstances shall enable us, to demonstrate at once, our disposition to works of mercy, and our obedience to the commands of Heaven; what will those men plead in excuse who refuse to *sell*, not at a fair and reasonable, but even at an extravagant and exorbitant rate? Will not they have one day to answer to God for that hunger, and that famine they have themselves created? When assembled at his dread tribunal, together with those miserable wretches, whom they will scarce permit to eat—do they expect to be received with this transporting salutation, “ I was an “ *hungered*, and ye gave me meat; for inasmuch “ as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me?” Or rather, will not the Judge of the world thus

address them : " I was an hungered, and ye gave
 " me no meat ; for inasmuch as ye did it not
 " unto these, ye did it not unto me ?" Will
 they then justify their conduct ? Ah, no ! They
 will say, " We fools" grasped at inordinate
 wealth, and in order to obtain it, " caused bread
 " to cease out of the land," and compelled " the
 " merry-hearted to sigh." Human laws,
 unhappily for us, laid us under no restraint, and
 we were deaf to the cries of want, and the
 lamentations of misery ; suppressing, in the
 acquisition of riches, the compunctions of
 remorse, by which means we have subjected
 ourselves to the wrath of God, and the severity
 of punishment.

There is one hardship so peculiarly severe to
 which the needy and indigent are exposed, that
 you will allow me to represent it to you ; ac-
 companying the representation with a fervent
 prayer to Almighty God, that the cause of their
 complaint may cease.

Now what can imagination conceive more
 trying to the feelings, and agonizing to the
 mind, than the mother of a family of helpless
 children, after collecting the fruits of her own
 and her husband's industry, and thereby obtaining
 as much money as would purchase a little corn,

at

at the rate at which it was sold in the market, comforting the hearts of her infant offspring, that the moment she has got it, she will, by the most speedy process, make it into bread? She leaves them counting the moments of her absence, and impatient for her return. As the sons of Jacob presented themselves before Joseph with "money" "in their hands in full weight," so doth she, with piteous accents, urge her wants; yet has she the mortification of being refused by the person whose grain she desires to purchase, under the pretence of *avoiding the trouble of disposing of it in small quantities*. "The bread of the needy," says the Scripture, "is their life; he that defraudeth," or depriveth "them of it, is a man of blood." Attend the disappointed mother, her bowels yearning over her children, to her wretched habitation, and there behold her little ones running with joyful countenances to meet her; but their mirth is soon turned into lamentations. Hear the disconsolate mother saying to her beloved little ones—alas! my children, I cannot get you bread; money I had honestly procured, but I am not able to obtain food to satisfy your hunger. The picture is not imaginary; and however they who, as the Scripture expresses it, "have eaten and are full," may deride the melancholy representation, let them know that many villages

have lately exhibited such a lamentable scene. A reproach, indeed, it is to a Christian country; a severe reproach to the professors of the Gospel, the design of which is to make of all the inhabitants of the earth, but one people; of that people, but one family; of that family, but one heart and one soul.

Permit me here to mention, without offence, a circumstance which has not escaped general observation.

In the heavy imposition which is laid upon the country, proportionate to the circumstances of the individual, the farmer has been, in a great measure, I might say, altogether, exempted.* How far, therefore, he ought to be influenced by this consideration in supplying his needy neighbours, the industrious mechanic, and diligent manufacturer, with corn, at a price commensurate with their wages, for the support of their wives and children, it becomes not me to determine. But if human motives fail, let not the declaration in my text, "He that withhold-

* Acting as a commissioner under the Income Bill, I observed that farmers who occupy land estimated at nearly 400l. per annum, a third of which is their own, do not pay more than the clergy whose entire property consists of preferment of 165l. per annum.

“eth corn, the people shall curse him,” which we have, God knows, seen abundantly verified, let it not, my Christian brethren, be sounded in your ears in vain.

It may not here be improper briefly to point out some of the evil consequences arising from an artificial scarcity of corn.

In the severe scarcity with which this country was afflicted four years ago, the wealthy increased their fortunes in a manner equally rapid and abundant, but the lower class of farmers entailed on themselves, and their posterity, innumerable evils. Subject, as they are, to losses by the failure of their crops, by unforeseen and unavoidable accidents, with a certainty of being able to gain no more than what will just enable them to exist—so prodigious has been the increase of their rents—their situation is considered to be, of all others, the least enviable. Whilst their independent neighbours are possessed of large stacks, and full granaries, they have the mortification of reflecting, that necessity compelled them to dispose of their grain before they could derive any extraordinary advantage from it. The additional wages they have been compelled to pay their servants and labourers, which, it was vainly expected, would have fallen to their former

former rate, when the cause which occasioned them ceased to exist, have been so great, as to be a very considerable diminution even from the profits of the opulent.

You cannot be ignorant that it is now the general wish ; you cannot be without apprehension, that there will soon, should one artificial scarcity so quickly succeed another, be a general petition of the country to the Legislature, to interpose its authority, and exercise its controul, in a circumstance in which the welfare of the community is so essentially interested.* What the wisdom of the Legislature may suggest, its power can enforce. Your complaints may then be as loud against the expedience, as is the cry of the country for the necessity of the measure ; which, be it what it may, will be said to be occasioned by yourselves.

* Such an interposition, it will be said, will be extremely injurious to agriculture ; in some cases, perhaps, it will be so. But whatever be the injury, it cannot, surely, be thought adviseable, that more than one half of the community should be starved, in order that the agriculturists, the dealers in corn, and the millers should be enriched. The consequences which may arise from an artificial scarcity, I shudder to anticipate. I beg leave to refer the reader to a Sermon which I published on account of the Thanksgiving for the abundant Harvest in 1796.

“ He

" He that withholdeth corn, the people shall
 " curse him; but blessings shall be upon the
 " head of him that selleth it." That such
 curses will not be disregarded, we may learn
 from the wise son of Sirach. " Turn not
 " away," saith he, " thine eye from the needy,
 " and give him not cause to curse thee: for if
 " he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his
 " prayer shall be heard of Him that made him."
 And in another place, " A prayer out of a poor
 " man's mouth reacheth the ears of God, and
 " his judgment cometh speedily." In what
 manner the curses of God may be poured upon
 those who " oppress the poor to increase their
 " riches;" whether " He break the pride of their
 " power, or their land shall not yield her in-
 " crease;" or whether He bring disgrace and
 wretchedness upon their families; and, " in send-
 " ing a curse upon them, shall," as the prophet
 awfully expresses it, " curse their very bless-
 " ings:" or whether He shall reserve his curses
 unto that day, when " they who shewed no
 " mercy, shall have judgment without mercy;"
 in whatever manner his wrath may be expressed,
 and his indignation directed, may we all be the
 objects, not of judgment; but of mercy! That
 they whom He hath placed in the lowest sphere
 of life, to encounter its blasts, and struggle with
 its storms, should not " be helped to right when
 " they

" they suffer wrong," either through the stratagems of the subtle, or the oppression of the powerful, can never be consistent with the character of that gracious Being, " whose goodness " is over all his works ;" whose distinguishing attribute it is " to deliver the poor from him that " is too strong for him ; yea, the poor, and " him that is in misery, from him that spoileth " him." If, then, the misery which the poor endure is indeed owing to the hard-heartedness and rapacity of those who, from avaricious motives, withhold their corn ; take heed to yourselves, lest the Lord " should plead their " cause, and should hereafter spoil the souls of " those that now spoil them." Not having bread to eat, they may beseech the Almighty, with the Psalmist, that " the children of all those " who so inhumanly withhold it, " may be fatherless, " and their wives may become widows ; that " their children may be vagabonds, and be reduced to beg their bread ; that the extortioner " may consume all that they have ; and that " others may spoil their labours." But whether their sufferings may provoke such petitions ; or whether it shall please God that " judgment " shall not be executed speedily," yet be assured that, however He may delay, He will not finally fail " to smite with a curse that man who, " by oppressing the poor reproacheth his Maker."

The

The displeasure of God cannot then, surely, either be too reverently feared, or too humbly deprecated. But if the withholding of corn subject men, as we have seen, to his curses, the selling of it for the support of the needy will no less entitle them to his blessings. How often have you lamented, when you have seen a fellow creature without clothes to cover his nakedness, and food to satisfy his hunger, that Providence had not placed you in a situation which would have empowered you, in relieving him under the pressure of such an accumulation of miseries, to have solaced your own soul with the most substantial blessings wealth can enjoy, and liberality obtain? So peculiarly are you now circumstanced, that, not by "selling all you have, and giving to the poor;" no, only by disposing of your corn even at more than its intrinsic value, you may gain at once the riches of this world, and the next; you can now, more extensively and efficaciously than the Rich and Great, "strengthen the weak hands, and support the feeble knees;" and thus, in a new and unexpected manner, "bring upon your heads, the blessing of him that is ready to perish. Blessed be he," saith holy David, "that considereth the poor and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord shall love him, and bless him, and multiply him."

"He

“ He shall bless the fruit of thy land and of thy
“ corn, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks
“ of thy sheep, and thou shalt be blessed above
“ all people. He will give thee rain upon thy
“ land in due season, the first rain and the latter
“ rain, that thou mayst gather in thy corn. And
“ He will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle,
“ that thou mayst eat and be full.” Now whe-
ther by withholding corn for the sake of obtain-
ing a temporary advantage, you will bring upon
you the hatred of man, and the curse of God ;
or by selling it, and promoting the interest, and
comfort, and happiness of those who must other-
wise “ lack bread,” you will entitle yourselves
to the mercy and acceptance of God—with such
motives before you, determine for yourselves.
“ I have set before you blessing and cursing.”
Ponder the subject deeply in your hearts. And
if ye desire blessings upon your head in this
life ; if, when ye stand before the Throne of
God, beholding both the happiness of heaven,
and the torments of hell, you shall supplicate
the Judge, that you may obtain the one, and
escape the other, act conformably to the dictates
of your reason, and the admonitions of your
conscience.

FINIS.

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